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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,
B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON DEMOCRACY

Editorial Commentary

-- "After heads banged against the walls!"

Columnist and former Minister of Information Saleh Qallab writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (09/25): "There are indications that seem to be correct that the Americans have realized, after a very bitter experience, that bringing democracy to this region ala the American Way and with force has failed miserably.... The Bush administration waged on the possibility of creating new alliances and ranks in this region and on the possibility of employing moderate Islamic forces and parties to fight terrorism, violence and extremism, but the result was that it only ended up reaping thorns and achieving one loss after the other in all the countries that were subjected to this experiment.... It seems now, indeed it is certain, that the Americans, after having banged their heads against the wall of the truth, are beginning to realize the extent of the sin they have committed and are reconsidering their calculations without any delusions. They realize that one bird in the hand is better than a thousand in the tree and that the worst policy a country can follow, especially a superpower, is to pursue its enemies and to abandon its friends for the sake of an unrealistic and incorrect wager, that is similar to going into the wild forest to turn the beasts into tame cats."

-- "A different culture"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (09/25) refers to the people's protests against the prime minister in Hungary and says: "The people of Eastern Europe are new to democracy but they have become capable of giving lessons in owning freedom and free political will to effect change.... Sometimes, I feel that the Arab people are really far away from having the capacity for democracy. Every time I look at Arab political parties and civil society institutions and their poorly status in terms of popular support and organizational skills, I realize that our culture is different from their culture in Europe and even Latin America, East Asia and West Africa. Our culture is different! I am not happy to say that, but I am referring to it as being a disastrous thing and as one of the reasons for the spread of extremism in the Arab and Muslim worlds." HALE